



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
April 25, 2017

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is to notify you that a decision has been made regarding a Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposed grazing lease renewal on a portion of the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area (BTWMA). My decision is to move forward with the proposed action. The lease will allow the removal of current vegetation by grazing livestock as a management tool to enhance the subsequent availability and palatability of fall and spring forage on that portion of the BTWMA described in the Environmental Assessment and Draft Grazing Management Plan.

No modifications were made in the documents you received/reviewed after the public review period. Please consider your previous copies of the Environmental Assessment and Draft Management Plan along with the stipulations of this Decision Notice as final.

Comments received regarding the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area Proposal are summarized in the enclosed Decision Notice. It is my recommendation to move forward with the proposed grazing lease renewal on the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area specific to the Polloch Meadows and Upper Cottonwood Creek areas.

Thank you very much for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary Bertellotti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent.

Gary Bertellotti
Regional Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
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DECISION NOTICE

BEARTOOTH WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA Grazing Lease Renewal Proposal - Polloch Meadows/Upper Cottonwood Creek

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to seasonally graze a portion of the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area (BTWMA), located near upper Cottonwood Creek. This one year grazing system consists of 2 pastures locally known as "Polloch Meadows" and "Upper Cottonwood" (approximately 450 and 400 acres) within the BTWMA. The proposed grazing lease would allow cattle to be utilized as a management tool to remove residual vegetation, thus enhancing the availability and palatability forage primarily for elk and mule deer on that portion of the WMA. This portion of the WMA has been successfully grazed in a similar fashion with adjacent and cooperating lessee Sieben Live Stock Company since 2006.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS

FWP is required to assess impacts to the human and physical environment under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The Beartooth Wildlife Management Area grazing lease renewal proposal and its effects were documented by FWP in an Environmental Assessment.

A 21-day public comment period ran from April 3 through April 24, 2017. Public notices of the draft Polloch Meadows/Upper Cottonwood Grazing Lease Renewal Proposal and Environmental Assessment were placed on the FWP web site and were announced in a news release to the area and statewide newspaper outlets. Hard copies were available at the FWP Region 4 office in Great Falls and were offered via mail at request.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Solicitation of public input resulted in receipt of 3 comments. Comments were all received as e-mail responses. The responses came from one organized group (Russell Country Sportsmen Association) with the remainder from two private individuals. All three comments were in support of the proposal. Following are comments received during the comment period.

- 1) I fully support the proposed Beartooth WMA Grazing leases. I have personally witnessed the positive impact of cattle helping remove the old grass.

Respectfully

George Donnelly

Helena MT

- 2) Cory, The Russell Country Sportsmen's Association, at the April board meeting voted to strongly support the one year grazing lease on the Beartooth WMA as written. Thanks for all your work on this, and if we can be of any further assistance please contact us.

John Borgreen, Sec.

RCSA

- 3) Cory, I approve of this lease and the adjustments to lease dates, as discussed at the Devils Kitchen working group meeting. You are doing an excellent job of managing the forage for our wildlife, Thanks Cory... Randy

DECISION

Utilizing the Environmental Analysis, Management Plan and public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP that addresses the interests and issues identified for this proposed project. Given results of FWP's analysis coupled with the nature of the public comment, acceptance of this grazing proposal on the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area is warranted. After review of this proposal and the corresponding public support and comment, it is my recommendation that FWP proceed with the grazing lease renewal as described on the Beartooth Wildlife Management Area.

Signed,



Gary Bertellotti
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BTWMA Grazing Proposal Environmental Assessment Decision Notice Mailing List

George Donnelly – Helena

Russell Country Sportsmen Association – John Borgreen

Randy Knowles – Great Falls